



UNESCO Chair in
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland
CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE



ACTIVATING SOCIAL EMPATHY - COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

COMMUNITY PILOT EVALUATION

UNESCO CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

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Overview

The *Activating Social Empathy (ASE)* programme was developed by researchers at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway, in collaboration with Foróige and the UNESCO Chair in Community, Leadership, and Youth Development at the Pennsylvania State University. The programme builds on theory and practice in the area of Social and Emotional Learning and is underpinned by a research programme exploring empathy, social responsibility and civic behaviour in adolescence. There are currently two versions of the ASE programme available; A Schools Programme, which is designed as a resource for teachers working with secondary school students, and a Community Programme, which is designed as a resource for youth workers working with youth in non-formal education settings.

The *Activating Social Empathy* community programme is an innovative, interactive youth programme, which aims to promote personal and social development in young people by teaching core empathy skills and helping youth foster a connection between empathy, social responsibility, and civic action.

The specific aims of the *Activating Social Empathy* Community Programme are to:

- **Cultivate Youth Empathy Skills.**
- **Improve Interpersonal Relationships.**
- **Promote Social Responsibility.**
- **Encourage Civic Action.**

The ASE community programme is a 12-week empathy training programme, which targets an adolescent age group. The programme consists of 12 interactive sessions, with each session designed to be delivered once a week, for 12 consecutive weeks. Each session is comprised of a number of interactive activities, which are designed to help young people develop and hone their empathy skills in a fun and interactive manner.

The content of the programme is structured around four key learning principles (Understanding Empathy; Practicing Empathy; Overcoming Barriers to Empathy; Putting Empathy in Action). First, the young people learn about what empathy is and why it is important; young people then spend a number of weeks practicing and strengthening their empathy skills; next the young people spend time discussing the barriers to empathy and brainstorming how they can overcome these barriers; and finally the programme culminates with youth “putting empathy into action” and taking part in a social action project of their own choosing.

The *Activating Social Empathy* community programme is designed to be facilitated by trained Foróige youth worker(s) and is intended to be delivered in a small-group context. All facilitators undergo facilitation training prior to beginning the *ASE* community programme. Additionally, a comprehensive facilitation manual is provided to every facilitator intending to facilitate the programme. The manual provides detailed instructions on how to facilitate each activity and provides helpful suggestions for how to access other additional resources. Ongoing training and facilitation advice are provided by a Foróige training officer for the duration of the programme.

Each young person who participates in the *ASE* community programme is provided with an accompanying student workbook. These workbooks are intended to aid youths' learning and help them to complete each activity. The workbooks also act as a reflection tool, where the young people are encouraged to privately reflect on, and document, their own personal learning from each session.

The *ASE Online* community programme is an online alternative to the *Activating Social Empathy* community programme (described above), which was developed for the purposes of online facilitation with youth groups, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Activating Social Empathy Online* is designed to be delivered through any video conferencing platform/app where online group video chat is enabled, such as Zoom or Google Hangouts. The online programme avails of a variety of online teaching tools to deliver the programme content and create an interactive environment in an online context. For example, facilitators are encouraged to avail of the use of 'break-out rooms', online whiteboard or annotate options, 'Share Screen' functions, and shared Google/Word documents and other interactive techniques.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to conduct a pilot evaluation into the effectiveness of the *Activating Social Empathy Online* community programme. Specifically, a mixed-methods research design is used to quantitatively and qualitatively explore the impact that participation in the *ASE Online* programme has on youth empathy and prosocial responding over time. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at NUI Galway. The study aims to explore the perspectives of both programme participants and facilitators and is comprised of three major evaluation components (*Youth Pre-Post Questionnaires; Youth Focus Groups; Staff Open-Ended Questionnaires*). Each evaluation component was carried out between May-December 2020, during which time social distancing guidelines were in place across the Republic of Ireland due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Component	Method	Description
Evaluation Component 1	Youth Pre & Post Questionnaires	<p>Young people complete questionnaires assessing their empathy skills, social responsibility values, and civic conduct, before and after taking part in the <i>Activating Empathy Online</i> programme.</p> <p>Pre (Before) and Post (After) responses are compared to examine whether any changes in youth’s empathic attitudes and civic behaviours occurred after their participation in the programme.</p>
Evaluation Component 2	Youth Focus Groups	<p>Semi-structured focus group interviews are carried out with select youth participants, once they have completed the <i>Activating Empathy Online</i> programme.</p> <p>Youths are asked to share their thoughts about the programme, discuss their perceptions of the impact the programme made on their attitudes/behaviours, and make recommendations for how the programme can be improved.</p>
Evaluation Component 3	Staff Questionnaires	<p>Foróige staff members are asked to complete an open-ended survey once they have finished facilitating the <i>Activating Empathy Online</i> programme.</p> <p>Staff are asked to provide feedback on the perceived effectiveness of the programme and make recommendations for how the programme could be improved</p>

Component 1 - Youth Questionnaires

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this component is to examine whether youth showed changes in their empathic and civic attitudes and behaviours after completing the *ASE Online* community programme. Specifically, this study aims to:

- Examine whether youth show differences in empathy and emotional self-efficacy skills after taking part in the *ASE Online* community programme, in comparison to their pre-programme skill level.
- Assess whether youth show changes in social responsibility and citizenship values after taking part in the *ASE Online* community programme, in comparison to their pre-programme values.
- Determine whether youth evidence changes in their prosocial and civic behaviours after taking part in the *ASE Online* community programme, in comparison to their pre-programme behaviours.

Methods & Procedure

All young people participating in the *ASE Online* community programme between June-December 2020 were invited to take part in this study. Youth were contacted by their programme facilitators and provided with detailed information about the pilot evaluation. All youth were asked to participate in this study on an informed consent basis. Only those young people who provided proof of written parental consent and personal assent were included in this study.

All youth who agreed to participate in the pilot evaluation were asked to complete two online questionnaires. Youth were asked to complete the first questionnaire approximately one week before starting the *ASE Online* community programme (e.g. Time 1/Pre-Programme Survey). This questionnaire asked youth to respond to an array of questions assessing their current empathy skills, social values and civic behaviours. Approximately one week after completing the *ASE Online* community programme, youth were asked to take part in a second online questionnaire (e.g. Time 2/Post-Programme Survey). This questionnaire asked the youth participants to respond to questions assessing their current empathy skills, social values and civic behaviours, and employed the same questions as those used in the first survey.

The Time 2 questionnaires also included a set of open-ended questions, which asked youth to provide feedback on their experience of the programme. These questions were included in order to explore youths' perceptions of how the programme had/had not impacted them (e.g. on their attitudes/behaviours/ relationships/knowledge/skills etc.); what they liked/disliked about the programme; and their recommendations for how the programme could be improved. The Time 1 and Time 2 questionnaires were conducted approximately 14 weeks apart. Both questionnaires took approximately 15-20 minutes for youth to complete. A comprehensive summary of all measures employed in this study is provided overleaf.

Measures

A variety of measures were used to assess youths' empathic skills, social values and civic behaviours. A total of six individual outcomes were assessed. All measures employed in this

study were based on previously validated scales. Descriptive data (e.g. gender, age, motivation for joining Foróige etc.) was also collected from each participant.

Outcome	Scale Name - Authors	Description/Scoring
Empathy	Adolescent Measure of Empathy & Sympathy – <i>Vossen et al. 2015</i>	The AMES is a 12-item scale which is designed to measure cognitive empathy, affective empathy and sympathy in adolescents (e.g. <i>When people around me are nervous, I become nervous too</i>). Scores can range from 1-60. Higher scores represent higher levels of empathy.
Emotional Self-Efficacy	Dealing with Emotions in Others – <i>Qualter et al. 2015</i>	Emotional self-efficacy is assessed using an 8-item scale, which measures youths’ perceptions of their ability to understand the emotions of others (e.g. <i>I can figure out what made someone feel the way they feel</i>). Scores may range on a scale of 1-40. Higher scores represent greater emotional self-efficacy.
Social Responsibility	Youth Social Conscience Scale – <i>Bebiroglu et al. 2013</i>	The Youth Social Conscience scale is a 6-item scale that assesses youths’ sense of responsibility regarding problems in society (e.g. <i>“Helping other people is important to me”</i>). Scores can range on a scale of 1-30. Higher scores are indicative of greater social responsibility values.
Citizenship	Personally Responsible Citizen – <i>Flanagan et al. 2007</i>	Youths’ sense of citizenship is measured using a 6-item scale, which assesses the importance youth place on helping others in society (e.g. <i>“I think people should assist those in their lives who are in need of help”</i>). Scores can range from 1-30, with higher scores representing a greater sense of citizenship.
Prosocial Behaviour	Prosocial Conduct Scale – <i>White 2014</i>	Prosocial behaviour was assessed using a 5-item scale, which measures the extent to which youth help and care for others (e.g., <i>“I help other kids even if I don’t know them well”</i>). Scores range from 1-35. Higher scores represent higher levels of prosocial behaviour.
Online Civic Behaviour	Online Civic Behaviour – <i>Jugert et al. 2011</i>	Online civic behaviour was assessed using the 5-item scale which assessing the extent to which youth engage in online civic activities (e.g. <i>‘Participated in an online-based petition, protest or boycott’</i>). Scores range from 1-35. Higher scores indicate greater youth engagement in online civic behaviours.

Results

In total, 59 young people (14 boys, 44 girls and 1 non-binary) completed the Time 1 questionnaires (i.e. before beginning *ASE Online*). Youth were aged between 13-18 years. The average age was approximately 15 years ($M=15.63$; $SD=1.36$), and the majority were in their 4th or 5th year of secondary education. Of the 59 respondents, 55 identified as being Irish, with a large percentage of the sample currently living in Donegal (see Figure 1). Most youth had been attending Foróige for less than 2 years (see Figure 2). The most common reasons for joining Foróige were due to the involvement/encouragement of friends/family or for personal development (e.g. improve knowledge/skills) reasons (Figure 3). On average, youth scored their enjoyment of Foróige as an 8.78 out of 10.

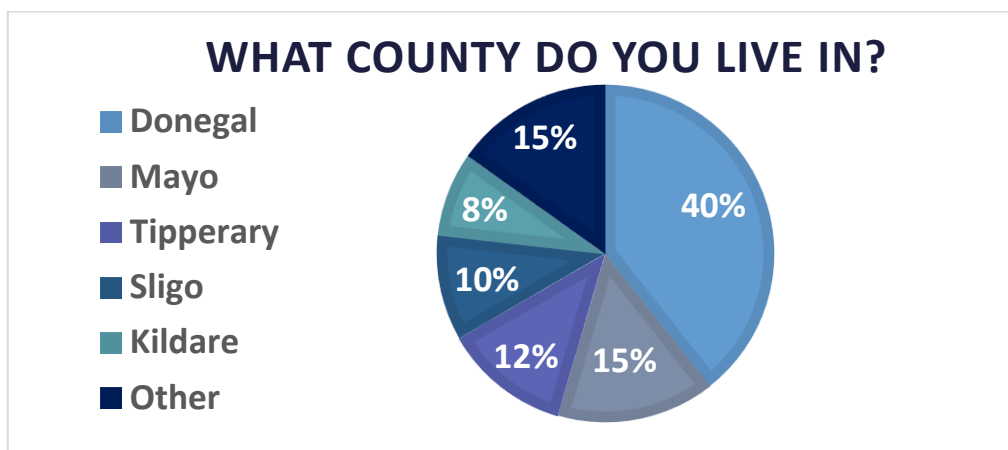


Figure 1. County in Ireland

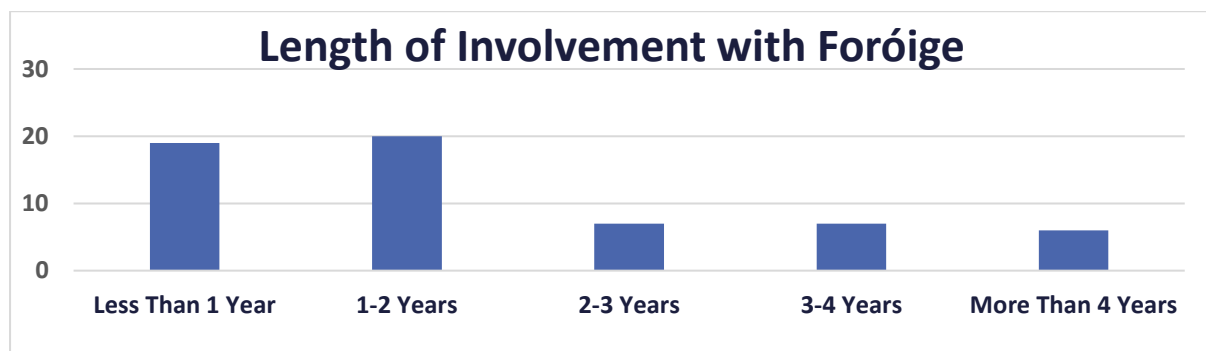


Figure 2. Number of Years Involved with Foróige



Figure 3. Reasons for Becoming Involved with Foróige

In total, 31 young people (12 boys, 18 girls, 1 non-binary) completed the Time 2 questionnaires (i.e. after having completed the *ASE Online* community programme). This indicates an attrition rate of 47% from Time 1 to Time 2. Approximately 25% of Time 2 respondents lived in Donegal, 23% were from Mayo, 13% were from Tipperary, and 10% were from Kildare, while the remaining 29% were from other Irish Counties.

Changes in Outcomes from Time 1 to Time 2

A series of repeated measures t-test were carried out in order to examine whether youth denoted any changes in their empathic skills, social values or civic behaviours from Time 1 to Time 2. Separate comparisons were conducted for each of the six outcomes of interest: *Empathy*, *Emotional Self-Efficacy*, *Social Responsibility Values*, *Citizenship*, *Prosocial Behaviour* & *Online Civic Behaviour*. A summary of the observed findings for each individual outcome is outlined below.

Empathy

Significant changes in young people’s empathic responding was observed from Time 1 to Time 2 ($t[26] = -2.65, p = .01, d = .48$). In comparison to their pre-programme scores (M=43.93; SD=5.49), youth evidenced higher levels of empathic responding after having taken part in the *ASE Online* community programme (M=46.48; SD=5.15).

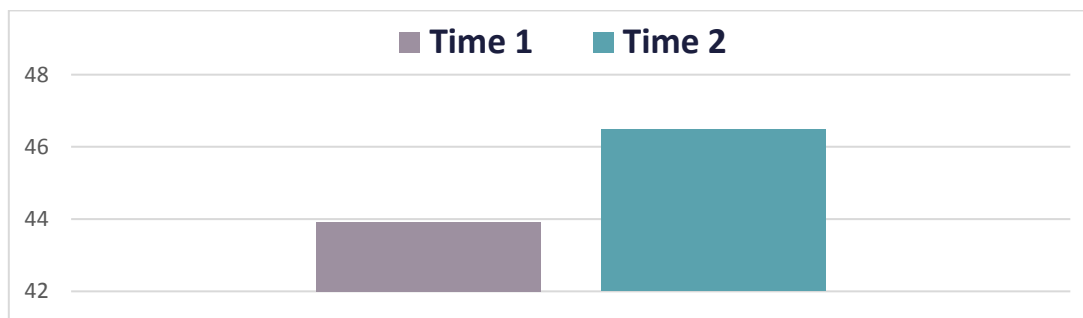


Figure 4. Youths’ Empathy Levels Before (Time 1) and After (Time 2) Taking Part in Activating Empathy Online.

Emotional Self-Efficacy

Results indicated that youth also showed significant ($t[26] = -4.36, p < .001, d = .83$) changes in their emotional self-efficacy after having taken part in the *ASE Online* community programme (see Figure 5). Specifically, youth endorsed higher levels of emotional self-efficacy at Time 2 (M=31.71; SD=4.10) than they did at Time 1 (M=28.04; SD=4.71).

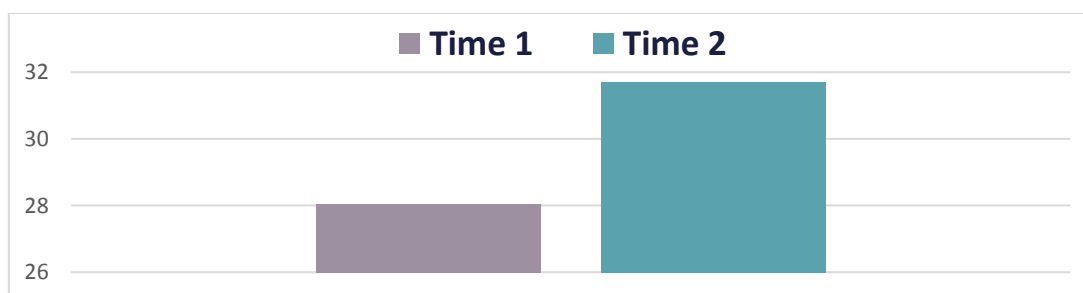


Figure 5. Youths’ Emotional Self-Efficacy Levels Before (Time 1) and After (Time 2) Taking Part in Activating Empathy Online.

Social Responsibility

Findings showed that there were no significant changes ($t[25] = -.41, p = .69$) in youths' social responsibility from Time 1 (M=25.69; SD=4.21) to Time 2 (M=26.00; SD=4.10).

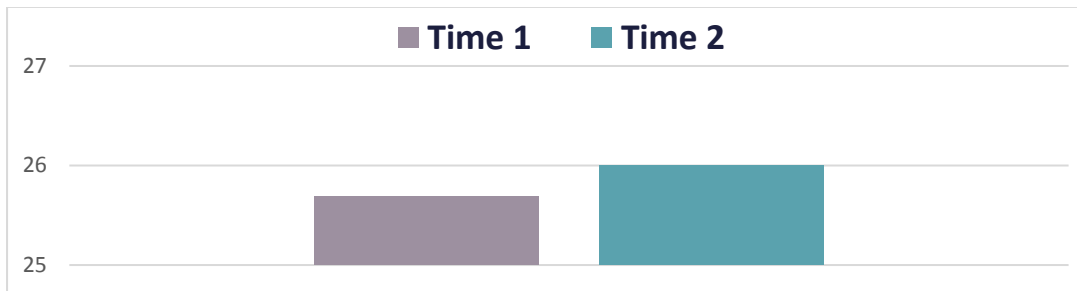


Figure 6. Youth Social Responsibility Before (Time 1) and After (Time 2) Taking Part in Activating Empathy Online.

Citizenship

Results indicated that there were no significant changes ($t[25] = -.69, p = .49$) in youths' sense of citizenship from Time 1 (M=24.50; SD=3.53) to Time 2 (M=24.88; SD=3.65).

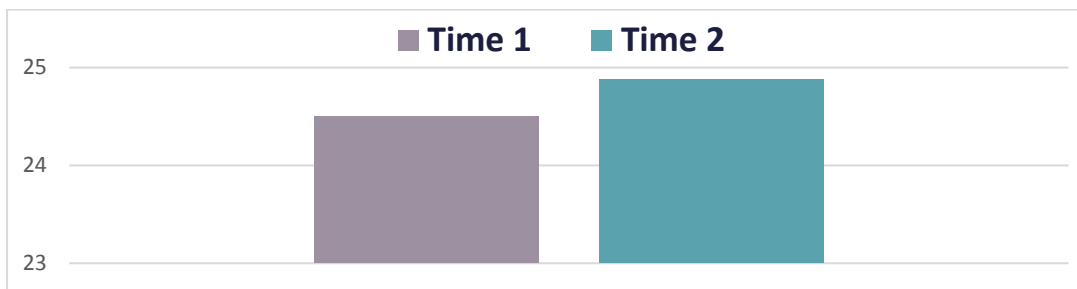


Figure 7. Youth Sense of Citizenship Before (Time 1) and After (Time 2) Taking Part in Activating Empathy Online.

Prosocial Behaviour

Findings from the paired samples t-tests revealed that there were no significant changes ($t[25] = -1.21, p = .24$) in youths' prosocial behaviour from Time 1 (M=27.04; SD=3.98) to Time 2 (M=27.96; SD=4.96).

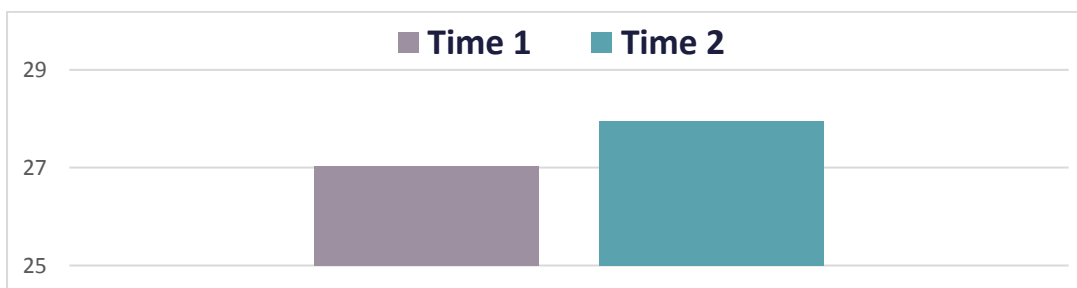


Figure 8. Youth Engagement in Prosocial Behaviour Before (Time 1) and After (Time 2) Taking Part in Activating Empathy Online.

Online Civic Behaviour

Findings suggested that there were no significant changes ($t[25] = -.93, p = .35$) in youths' online civic behaviour from Time 1 (M=15.80; SD=8.18) to Time 2 (M=17.56; SD=9.28).

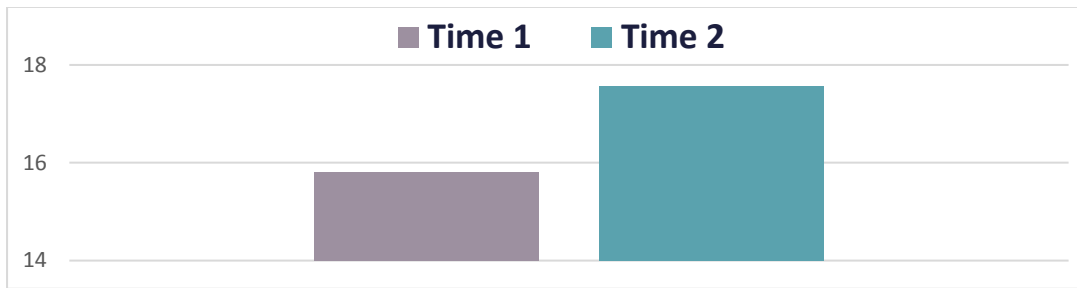


Figure 9. Youth Engagement in Online Civic Behaviour Before (Time 1) and After (Time 2) Taking Part in Activating Empathy Online.

Youth Feedback on the Activating Empathy Online Programme

The Time 2 questionnaires also asked youth to provide feedback on their experience of the *ASE Online* community programme. Youths' responses to several open ended questions (e.g. *What did you like about the programme?*; *What did you not like about the programme?*; *In what ways, if any, did the programme influence you?*; *Do you have any recommendations for how the programme could be improved?*) were analysed in order to explore youths' perceptions of the *ASE Online* community programme.

Perceived Advantages of the ASE Online Community Programme

The young people who responded to this question (e.g. *What did you like about the programme?*) most frequently reported that they liked learning about empathy and how to take other people's perspectives into account. Youth commented on the personal development that occurred over the course of the programme and how they enjoyed developing these new skills.

"I liked learning about empathy and learning the difference between empathy and sympathy"

"I like that I learned to be more considerate of people and to try walk in their shoes"

"I liked discovering more about myself and what my values are and investigating whether or not I adhere to them.... I learned a lot which I genuinely believe has made me a better person"

Youth noted that they liked the *"fun and interactive"* nature of the programme; enjoyed *"making new friends"* and listening to *"other people's opinions"* on these topics. Youth also reported that they liked the inclusive nature of the programme, the *"kindness and helpfulness of the facilitators"* and participating in the social action project.

Perceived Disadvantages of the ASE Online Community Programme

In response to the question “*what did you not like about the programme?*” youth commonly referred to the online nature of the programme, with most youth stipulating that they did not enjoy the online element.

“I would of liked it better if it was in person, but I know that couldn’t happen because of restrictions, apart from that I really enjoyed the programme”

“I did not like the online part as it was not the same and hard to communicate”.

“With it being online I found it to be forgotten and only remembered last minute”

Some youth also commented on the accompanying workbooks, stating that they encountered difficulties in completing these workbooks or disliked being asked to share the contents of these personal reflections.

“The only thing I didn't like was the workbook because it didn't really match up with the lessons and was just confusing overall”

“I didn't like how our reflection book had to be shared as it is something that I would have rather kept private”

“There was a lot of space in the boxes in the booklet and it felt a bit intimidating to write it all”

Finally, a couple of youth noted that they disliked the length of the programme and indicated that they would have preferred a shorter, more engaging course.

“Went on for too long”

“Too long, bit boring”

“I'd like if the activities were more fun and creative and if it could be a week programme”

Perceived Impact of the ASE Online Community Programme

When discussing how they were influenced by the programme, youth frequently referred to the impact the programme had on their empathy skills.

“The program helped me have a better understanding of empathy”.

“It gave me a better understanding of emotions and things that are going on in our world. I feel like I am now more aware of those around me”

Youth noted that the programme helped to improve their understanding of other people, had a positive impact on their interpersonal skills and made them recognise the importance of empathy.

“It helped me to think and try understand people more and why they are the way they are”

“It made me realise the impact on people’s lives with empathy involved”

“I feel it has made me more aware of other people's feelings and how others are in general”

“It opened my mind up and made me look at people on a deeper level and think about what they could potentially be going through”

A small number of young people commented on how the programme made a positive impact on their social behaviour or personal development.

“It heavily influenced my social life and how I communicate with people both physically and online”

“I believe this programme has made me more aware. I can now recognise relationships that are beneficial in my life as well as helping me to see some toxic ones. I also believe that I am more resilient because of it as I know myself better. I feel that I am more empathetic as I have learned that as humans we want empathy not sympathy, understanding not solutions and warmth not wisdom. It has shed light on the kind of person I want to be and how to become that person.”

Recommendations for Improving the ASE Online Community Programme







In relation to how to improve the programme, youth recommended *“having it in person”*; *“having more interactive lessons”*, making it *“shorter”* or providing *“more detail on the exercises and how they should be carried out”*. Youth also recommended refining the workbooks and suggested providing additional time at the end of the sessions to complete it or making the workbook *“easier to follow”*. Additionally, one young person suggested including additional ice breakers at the start of the programme and re-evaluating the repetitive nature of some of the exercises.

Conclusions

In conclusion, findings from this component of the pilot evaluation suggest that participation in the *ASE Online* community programme is associated with a number of positive outcomes for young people. In particular, the results from the quantitative investigation revealed that youth evidenced better empathy skills and expressed greater confidence in their ability to interact with, and understand others, after taking part in the online programme. However, the programme did not appear to induce any significant changes in young people’s social values or prosocial actions. When providing feedback on their experience of the programme, youth provided further evidence to suggest that the programme positively impacted on their empathy skills and made them more aware and considerate of others. A small number of youths implied that the programme inspired them to make positive changes in their actions or behaviours towards others. Youth identified learning about empathy; hearing others’ opinions about empathy; and participating in the action project as relevant highlights of the

ASE Online community programme. Youth also appeared to enjoy the interactive nature of the programme and the process of meeting new people. On the other hand, young people did not appear to enjoy the online nature of the programme, with some youth also struggling with the reflection process. Additionally, a small number of individuals felt that the programme was boring or repetitive in parts and provided several suggestions for how the programme could be improved, such as by providing clearer instructions or making the activities more interactive.

Table 1. Overview of Quantitative Findings from Component 1

Outcome Assessed	Significant Change Observed
Empathy	
Emotional Self-Efficacy	
Social Responsibility	
Citizenship	
Prosocial Behaviour	
Online Civic Behaviour	

Component 2 - Youth Focus Groups

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this component was to gain further insight into youths' opinions about the *ASE Online* community programme. This qualitative study aims to explore youths' experience of the programme in more detail and generate greater understanding of the applied impact of the programme. Specifically, this study aims to:

- Provide a forum for youth to discuss their experiences of the *ASE Online* community programme and share their recommendations for how the programme can be improved
- Explore youth's perceptions of the 'pros' and 'cons' of the *ASE Online* community programme.
- Explore the perceived impact of the programme on youths' attitudes, skills, or behaviours.

Methods & Procedure

Each youth group who had participated in Component 1 of this evaluation and finished the *ASE Online* community programme prior to December 2020 were invited to take part in this study. Youth were contacted by their programme facilitators and invited to take part in a focus group. Youth were provided with detailed information about the study and informed that the purpose of the focus group was to provide feedback on the *ASE Online* community programme. Only those young people who provided proof of written parental consent and personal assent were included in this study.

Youth who agreed to participate in this study were asked to take part in a focus group discussion about the *ASE Online* programme with other youth from their youth group. Each focus group session was facilitated by two members of the research team. Each focus group was facilitated online via Zoom. Programme facilitators were provided with a link to the online focus groups and were asked to share this link with the participating young people from their group. Programme facilitators were asked to join the online forum at the start of each focus group, in order to introduce the researchers to the young people. Facilitators then left the online call but remained contactable by private message. All focus groups were audio recorded, upon consent, for transcription purposes.

Youth who participated in the focus groups were asked to discuss their experience of participating in the *ASE Online* community programme; share their opinions about the online nature of the programme; discuss the positive and negative elements of the programme; share examples about what they learned from the programme and offer recommendations for improving the programme. Each focus group lasted for approximately 30-40 minutes.

Analyses

The conversation from each focus group was transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word and analysed using a thematic analysis style approach (Clarke et al., 2015). The raw

data from all three transcripts was reviewed and sorted into codes/categories, these codes were then analysed and sorted into relevant themes and sub-themes.

Results

Overall, 3 of the participating youth groups agreed to take part in the focus groups. In total, 10 young people (9 females, 1 male) participated in this study, with three youth taking part in two focus groups and four youth taking part in the other focus group.

Youth Perceptions of the ASE Online Community Programme

In general, youth appeared to enjoy the ASE Online community programme, with each young person noting that they would recommend the programme to other young people. See Figure 10 for a pictorial overview of the words used by youth to describe the programme.



Figure 10. Word Cloud Showing Summary of the Words Used to Describe the Programme.

Youth tended to speak about the programme in a positive light, frequently stating that the programme was interesting and that they enjoyed their experience of the course.

“It was good, and it was fun to do. I don't think there's anything I didn't like”.

- Young Person, Age 14

“I thought it was amazing, I loved every week of it...and I know you’re probably like “oh she’s just talking like this now” but I genuinely loved it”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“It’s just been so enriching... and it’s more than I’ve ever learned in a SPHE class in school or anything similar so I would definitely recommend it”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“It was interesting, of all of the projects I did [in Foróige], it was probably my favourite one. Like, when you look at it you think it’s just like... empathy and sympathy, but there’s more to it than just that, like there’s more information with it.”

- Young Person, Age 17

Although discussions of the programme were typically positive, some youth appeared to feel that parts of the programme were boring.

“The first few modules, or whatever they are, were a little bit boring, like, but on the whole it was really good”.

- Young Person, Age 16

What Youth Liked About the Programme

In their discussions about their experience of the course, youth identified various elements that they liked about the programme. First, youth highlighted several activities, which they found particularly informative or enjoyable over the course of the programme. These included taking part in the social action project, learning about the difference between empathy versus sympathy, and adopting the perspectives of individuals from marginalised groups. These activities appeared to stand out to youth as they felt these activities impacted them or helped them to think about others in a new way.

“We did this thing actually, we made a list, you know what do you think of people with drug problems... how do you feel about people who are immigrants or people like that, and you take a step forward if you felt a certain thing...and like do you know sometimes I wouldn’t even have had a second thought about them kind of people and then doing that... that changed my view about them and having empathy and stuff. It affected me in like thinking about other people... I can’t remember what we were doing, but I remember how it affected me and how it made me think differently about other people like that”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“You know, you forget like the difference between empathy and sympathy...you know they are words, you know, but you never actually think about what they really mean, and how to actually use them.”.

- Young Person, Age 18

“Something that stood out to me... we looked into empathy versus sympathy and that was like never a connection that I made in my brain but as soon as they said it I was like “Oh, my God, like that is brilliant”. Being able to understand if you are actually feeling with the person, or if you are feeling for them, and being there for them or being there to help them or just like “Oh, I’m sorry I hope you feel better soon” like the whole week we did that it was so good”

- Young Person, Age 16

“I liked the empathy project because it helped me to learn more about, you know, people, and learn to, like, be able to connect to them, and have empathy for them....I found out things I didn’t know before”.

- Young Person, Age 14

Other aspects which youth appeared to enjoy included the opportunity the programme provided to meet other young people and to engage in discussions with other people about empathy topics. Youth talked about how they liked being able to engage with other youth from different locations/ backgrounds and emphasised that they enjoyed listening to each other’s perspectives. Additionally, some youth appreciated the “*structure*” and “*routine*” the programme provided, which they believed was particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 restrictions.

“Doing the course was fantastic... because it was during lockdown it was mainly like a social outlet that I really enjoyed, in the sense of meeting new people from my own home which was really weird at the time”

- Young Person, Age 17

“Yeah, so with that I’m not on [a specific Youth programme] so there’s not like much crossover between the two groups in Foróige. So, it was cool to meet people who I otherwise wouldn’t have met”

- Young Person, Age 16

“I just liked doing the project because even just listening to what the [others] had done...it’s just crazy seeing how much of a difference just one person can make, ah, it was just really, really incredible to see.”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“At the end of each session, we all gave a nugget from the session and I just felt that that was so amazing... well it concluded the session but it also, like, gave the personal perspective toward it...It just summarised it great and it was a way of being able to hear everyone else’s opinions, like, it wasn’t just read from the book, it was coming from us ourselves. So it’s just really nice to hear like a summary, but then also like what the other people thought of the activity”

- Young Person, Age 17

The youth also commented on the important role played by the programme facilitators, and how the facilitation style and skills of facilitators contributed to their enjoyment of the programme.

“It was absolutely a fantastic programme, and I think that what really made it special was the people facilitating the programme and like their dedication to us on a weekly basis. They always came with a great attitude; were so attentive to us, if we ever had questions we could email them or talk to them separately, and they really, really helped because without them it wouldn’t have been half what it was, so the facilitators were really important in it”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“The facilitators were just amazing. Questions were put to you and you were able to just blather your mind and they were always just so accepting of whatever you said... it was just a really, really great experience”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“At the very start of the module everyone was kinda quiet and then every day we would come on and [the facilitators] would be recommending us to talk but they wouldn’t be forcing us to talk, so I just kind of think having the strong leaders there to guide us and advise us was so important”.

- Young Person, Age 17

What Youth Disliked About the Programme

In their discussions about the programme, young people noted that they did not particularly enjoy the online nature of the course. These youth frequently indicated that they felt more awkward and uncomfortable participating in the programme online, which negatively impacted their engagement in the activities/discussions. Youth also appeared to feel that it was more difficult to ask for help or clarification about a point in an online context. However, these issues may have been more prominent for youth at the start of the programme and appear to have dissipated somewhat over time.

“I hate being on phone calls in general so zoom calls...no. I like practical stuff, so like going in and talking in person, so that if I find something confusing, I can ask someone and everyone can help me”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“I didn’t think the zoom calls were that bad.... Apart from the fact, like, that we’re over the phone so there are less stuff said because people get nervous... Like, you know when you’re asking a question and there’s like five other people on the call, and they’re directing the question at all five people and for me, I feel uncomfortable answering the question in case two other people answer at the same time as me, and you’re like “oohhhhh”. [sic]

- Young Person, Age 17

“I’m going to say for like the first two weeks, it was really, really awkward... It was just that no one was really used to zoom yet and as well we kinda never knew when one person was going to start talking and we didn’t know anyone

else in the course so it was kinda... getting the discussions going was a bit kinda difficult”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“It was kind of awkward at the start just to know should I talk now or are we doing work now, but that went away pretty quickly, so it was good after that, it was just trying to get over that”.

- Young Person, Age 17

Issues with technology or internet access also appeared to contribute to youth’s discontent with the online course, noting that these issues made it more difficult to participate in group discussions, with many commenting that they would have preferred to participate in the programme in person.

“It's just like sometimes you know it could be glitchy and stuff and it's just hard to understand and like the presentations were good online, but I just rather it in person because you know with the activities it just would be easier in person”.

- Young Person, Age 14

“Like one day some people can't join in or else they'll be glitching. And so like in person you can do all the activities better and stuff and it's better to communicate with other people.”

- Young Person, Age 14

Although some youth believed that the online nature of the programme made it more convenient, others felt that the online nature would make the programme less appealing to young people, as it may be perceived as being less “fun” or “social”. Some youth also felt that young people may be less motivated to participate in a programme from home and that this may cause young people to become disinterested in the programme.

“For some people, online, like, when they're at home like that's their place to do what they want, that's like their relaxation time... and then like outside of that, Foróige and school, like, that's where that should be dealt with...it's weird getting used to all these online things”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“I think when it's online, like some people are like “oh, I've got homework” so they might not log on that day and stuff. But if it's in person, they'd want to go out and socialise and talk to their friends you know and have more fun, but it's just if it's at home, they might just not feel bothered for that day...but if it's in person they'd want to”.

- Young Person, Age 14

In addition to their dissatisfaction with the online nature of the programme, youth also appeared discontent with other aspects relating to the programme content and/or delivery. Specifically, some young people reported being confused when carrying out certain programme activities and felt that there was a lack of clear, detailed instruction provided at times. Youth appeared

to encounter similar issues when completing their workbooks, with some youth commenting that they did not understand the instructions provided in the workbooks or were unclear as to how they were to complete these sections. However, it should be noted that most youth felt that these issues only occurred on occasion, and that overall, instructions were clear.

“I thought the workbook was brilliant, but I wish they linked it more into the zoom meetings. Like I felt sometimes we left the zoom meeting without really knowing what we had to do in the Workbook that night”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“But like because we were in lockdown, I was sitting at home and trying to read the words [in the workbook] and it had a lot of smart words that I didn’t really understand. But then when I went in, and Foróige explained them to me it was really easy and stuff like that...I think it was that I was at home and I didn’t ask for help when I should have cause we were on video calls and stuff.”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“My critique would only be that some of the exercises were really oddly worded that we kinda went into our breakout rooms thinking what are we supposed to say here... like our facilitators were fabulous at explaining it as well as they could be even sometimes we were all a bit confused”.

- Young Person, Age 17

Additionally, a couple of young people felt that some of the activities were not interactive or entertaining enough, while others felt that more ice-breakers were needed to allow the youth more time to get-to-know one another.

“Like we went straight into some of the harder topics nearly, like we started talking about what empathy is quite early and I think that if we did a few more ice breakers at the beginning it would have made like the initial start to the course a bit easier to ease into but that really would be the only critique I’d have...”.

- Young Person, Age 16

“You know like with the activities, they’re not like really too interesting. I don’t know could you turn into maybe more like games or like something ...make them more interactive like”.

- Young Person, Age 18

Youth Recommendations

Although most youth were satisfied with the programme in its current form, they seemed to believe that the programme could be improved if some minor adjustments were made. In particular, youth believed that the inclusion of more fun, interactive activities, that focused on real-life scenarios, would be helpful.

“I think like having more activities that involve real life scenarios, that they might find themselves in and how they can reflect off their session to, like, effect their real life, and how they can make a change in that sense... like say your friend had something going on at home that was happening. And you got in an argument with him and how to think maybe about him or her and how they might be feeling”.

- Young Person, Age 14

“Maybe add a bit more practical stuff into it, and how to relate to it in the real world as well”

- Young Person, Age 17

“Because it’s Foróige, and it’s out of school you want to make it more kinda fun, activity based, and not just kinda writing”.

- Young Person, Age 18

The young people also seemed to believe that greater use of breakout rooms, providing clearer instructions, including more people in the group, and having better integration between the workbooks and the sessions could lead to a better programme experience.

“I feel like if someone is asking questions they should direct them at like one person or something, or then if the person didn’t know then move on to someone else or something like that, that’s all I can really think of”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“Put in that there are loads of breakout rooms, so like the young person, without the facilitator goes into them and they can have discussions, I feel that makes things more casual cause you can just have discussions with people your own age.”

- Young Person, Age 16

“Like maybe for the last 10 minutes, go through the workbook and the exercises that are in the workbook just to like link them together”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“I don’t know if it was maybe that near the end [the group] kind of had dwindled down to just us three... I don’t know if having a larger group would be better, but just maybe like a few more people so you can hear like the different ideas of everyone...cause like hearing your other peers talk was just so important to me it just really nice to hear them talk instead of just someone reading it, it just adds a more personal level so I think if you can like integrate that more it would be good.”

- Young Person, Age 17

Youth Identified Learning Outcomes

The majority of young people who took part in these focus groups appeared to be of the impression that they had “learned a lot” from their participation in the programme. More specifically, youth believed that they had learned “a lot about other people” and had become more considerate of what other people may be going through. Youth frequently discussed how the programme had taught them how to empathise with others more, and how to “think more before making judgements about people” and to “put yourself in other people’s shoes”.

“Doing that, I thought more about other people, and their backgrounds, you know... I became more empathetic because of it. I started to feel more what other people feel”.

- **Young Person, Age 14**

“I think I’ve definitely thought about other people more... like it opened my eyes to their situation and how they might be feeling. Just like with my friends like if we go into like an argument, like... just to think about them and how they feel”.

- **Young Person, Age 14**

“I just found this course was really good for just, like, really putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and seeing how it affects them. Because we did a load of exercises like that and it really just shows you that you need to do that and it’s really an enriching thing to do”.

- **Young Person, Age 16**

“It kinda made me realise as well – when they were explaining more and more of it – like if someone you really don’t like, cause you think they’re a bad person and they’re always like constantly nagging at ya, maybe they’re not having it easy at home, there’s obviously a reason they’re like that, they’re not like that for no reason and I never really took much thought about that until the programme I suppose”.

- **Young Person, Age 18**

Similarly, youth noted that they had learned better social skills as a result of participating in the programme and felt that the programme had helped them to learn better organisation and communication skills.

“It helped with my social skills, and like talking with my friends and stuff, and understanding, um, what they are going through and like maybe, realising that I’m not always right in an argument like”.

- **Young Person, Age 14**

“I do think it’s helped me communicate better with people... it’s really helped me communicate and kind of be more in the moment and not being venturing off in mind and stuff”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“Like teamwork and skills, cause we all had to come together to make up the project at the end, like dya know, we all had to think of an idea and we had to put our ideas together so working together was probably another skill there”.

- Young Person, Age 17

A small number of youths also discussed feeling more aware of how their actions impacted others and feeling more motivated to help others.

“Like, your words can trigger someone off. Like someone could be having a really bad day and then your words could like make things 10 times worse”.

- Young Person, Age 18

“It’s made me more aware of my actions and what I do and how it affects others”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“I feel like, coming out of it, like I’m just so much more aware of what’s going on around me and like being able to read a situation better and trying to understand how I should help the person”.

- Young Person, Age 16

Additionally, youths highlighted a variety of situations where they believed their new skills or learning would prove helpful, with some youth also providing examples of real-life situations where they had applied their learning from the programme. In general, youth spoke about using their skills or learning from the programme to improve their relationships with others (typically their friends and family) or to be less biased/prejudiced about others.

“I just think like you think more about people like... say you walk past someone in the corridor like think more about their story...and like everybody has their own life, their own story, their own things going on so you just have to be mindful, like not just pick on people for the sake of it you know you just have to think of others.

- Young Person, Age 14

“A few weeks ago... one of my friends was really stressed out... I felt like I knew how to approach the situation because I knew she needed someone to listen to her and help her calm down and I just felt that like my empathetic learning from this course really helped me to be there for her and to help her through that”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“It can help you with your first impressions and stuff...you know like when you’re meeting someone for the first time. I only started college two and a half months, and I went in and I didn’t take everyone by their first impression. I went in, I took my time, I got to know everyone and where everyone came from and all their backgrounds”.

- Young Person, Age 18

Youth appeared to believe that the learning from the programme was particularly helpful when dealing with situations of conflict.

“Like it is really good for young people because we’re getting in to fights...and they might not being physical fights, but maybe you’re fighting with your best friend or something like that and it makes you second think it “like maybe they had a bad day” or something like that...I just thought I got a lot from it”.

- Young Person, Age 17

“I suppose If I’m not agreeing with someone, and like what their opinion is , I’ve learned to take a step back, and like breathe, and either ignore them or try to put yourself in their shoes and understand why they think like that and why that’s their opinion and just realise that not everyone has to think the same or have the same opinions”.

- Young Person, Age 18

“Like say if I was in an argument with one of my sisters so I was like okay maybe I should think about how they feel. And not just myself...and what I can do to like improve the situation and make it good for both parties like”.

- Young Person, Age 14

“If you have like a small argument with friends like it just teaches me to think of how other people are feeling and what's going through their mind, and maybe we can like sort it out”.

- Young Person, Age 14

However, it was implied that there may be some limit to the extent to which the programme can teach youth applied empathy skills:

“But like as much as you’re supposed to have empathy for everyone... there’s still just some people I can’t have empathy for, just some people I can’t....just due to the way I think, there’s no changing that.”.

- Young Person, Age 18

Conclusions

In conclusion, findings from this component of the pilot evaluation suggest that youth enjoyed participating in the *ASE Online* Community Programme and believed that the programme promotes the development of empathy-related skills and values. Youth identified a number of activities from the programme (e.g. the social action project; empathy versus sympathy; scenarios) which they found to be enjoyable and made a positive impact on them. Youth suggested that the programme had taught them to become more cognisant of others and helped them to be better able to see things from other people's point of view. Youth emphasised the role the programme played in helping them pursue more positive interpersonal relationships, or in dealing with situations of conflict, with their friends or family. However, while youth reported enjoying engaging in this programme, most youth noted that they would have preferred to engage in an offline version of the *ASE Online* community programme. Youth believed that the online nature of the programme made it more difficult to engage in social discussions and felt that the activities were less fun and interactive when completed online. Additionally, youth also felt that other issues, such as the level of clarity provided in the written/verbal instructions or integration between the sessions and the workbook, took away from their enjoyment of the programme. Youth recommended making the sessions more applied and interactive in order to overcome these issues.

Component 3 - Staff Questionnaires

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this component was to gain insight into Foróige staff's perceptions about the utility of the *ASE Online* Community Programme. Specifically, this study aims to:

- Gather feedback from facilitators about the quality of training/instruction provided to staff in relation to the *ASE Online* community programme.
- Gain insight into the facilitation process
- Explore facilitators' perceptions of the applied impact of the *ASE Online* community programme.

Methods & Procedure

All staff members who helped to facilitate the *ASE Online* community programme to one or more youth groups during the period of June-December 2020 were invited to take part in this study. Staff were contacted directly by one of the authors of this report and provided with detailed information about this aspect of the pilot evaluation. Staff were informed that they were being invited to participate in an online survey in order to gather feedback about their perceptions of the *ASE Online* community programme and facilitation process and asked to participate on an informed consent basis.

Staff who agreed to participate in the study were asked to complete an online questionnaire. Staff were only asked to take part in this survey once they had completed the *ASE Online* community programme. Staff were asked to respond to a mixture of scale and open-ended questions, exploring their perceptions of the applied utility of the programme for young people and opinions of the facilitation process. Specifically, staff were asked to rate the perceived benefit of the programme for the young people in their group; their enjoyment of the facilitation process, and the clarity of instruction/training provided to them. Staff were also asked to provide feedback on the programme activities, to note any changes they observed in the young people's skills/behaviours over the duration of the programme and to provide recommendations for how the programme could be improved. The survey took approximately 5-10 minutes for staff to complete. In total, 5 staff members completed the facilitator survey.

Results

How Clear Were the Facilitation Instructions Provided in the Manual?

Staff were asked to rate the clarity of instruction provided in the facilitation manual using a scale of 1 (Not at All Clear) to 10 (Extremely Clear). Staff provided an average score of 8.6 (SD=1.52) on this scale, with no staff member rating the clarity of instruction lower than a 7 out of 10.

How Much Did You Enjoy Facilitating the Activating Empathy Online Programme?

Staff were asked to rate the extent to which they enjoyed facilitating the programme on a scale of 1 (Not at All Enjoyable) to 10 (Extremely Enjoyable). Staff provided an average score of 8.0 (SD=2.92) on this scale. However, one staff member rated their enjoyment of the facilitation process as a 3 out of 10.

How Beneficial is This Programme for Young People?

Staff were asked to rate the extent to which they believed that this programme would be beneficial for young people, using a scale of 1 (Not at All Beneficial) to 10 (Extremely Beneficial). Staff provided an average score of 7.8 (SD=2.17) on this scale. One staff member rated the perceived benefits of the programme as a 4, out of a possible 10.

Facilitators' Perceptions of Programme Activities

Facilitators provided feedback on the activities which they felt worked best with the young people involved. Some facilitators identified specific activities/sessions which the young people enjoyed, including *Session 2 (Empathy v Sympathy)*, *Session 4 (Finding Common Ground and Meditation)*, *Session 7 (Social exclusion)*, *Session 8 (Walking Debate)* and *Sessions 9-11 (Empathy action project)*. Others provided more general feedback, suggesting that the activities where young people are asked “to put themselves in others’ shoes” seemed to work well (“*I think it gave them a chance to experience how others might feel and allowed them to understand their own emotions and feelings*”). Two facilitators also recommended the activities that incorporated the use of Mentimeter (or other similar tools), “*as it was enjoyable and visual for young people in an online experience*” and encouraged empathy for non-humans.

On the other hand, other facilitators felt that the meditation and empathy for the wider world activities did not work well with their groups. Other activities/sessions identified by facilitators as not working well with the young people in their group included *Session 2 (Body Map)*, *Session 3 (Emotion Charades)*, *Session 5 (Someone Else’s Shoes)*, *Session 6 (Empathy Playlist)*, *Session 8 (Sustainable Development Goals)*, and *Session 10 (Logic Modelling)*. Similarly, it was noted that the exercise with the scenarios did not work as youth “*immediately went into fixing the issue not developing the empathy or understanding of the individual long term as per the scenario*” and one facilitator felt that including the reflections during the sessions did not work well. It should also be noted that one facilitator felt that some of the activity outcomes were repetitive and that some “*activities contradict what was taught in other activities such as stereotypes or making assumptions and scenario cards.*” For further information on facilitators’ perception of each session, please see Appendix 1.

Facilitators' Perceptions of the Applied Impact/Benefit of the Programme

Facilitators provided feedback on their perceptions of the perceived benefits associated with the programme and commented on whether they noticed any changes in the behaviours of the young people in their group, overtime. Facilitators noted observing some positive changes in youths’ empathy skills and approach to conversations, from approximately mid-way through the programme.

“I noticed that it was easier for them to identify what empathy is and distinguish it from other things. They were able to describe ways in which they would activate empathy.”

“As the programme went on you could clearly see that they started to understand empathy and how it can affect our everyday lives; how by simple actions they can help change people’s views and opinions”.

“There was a real change in their conversations and as the weeks went on they certainly were able to discuss topics more empathically”

Overall, facilitators appeared to believe that the programme was beneficial for young people, helping youth to develop a sense of responsibility, enabling youth to reflect on their interpersonal relationships, and providing “*better understanding of what empathy is and why it is important to develop and better self-awareness*”. However, one facilitator had reservations about the extent to which the programme benefitted the young people in his/her group, remarking that some activities were more helpful than others and that the impacts of the programme may be dependent on the characteristics of the young people involved.

“I do believe they somewhat benefitted from taking part. I'm not sure if some [young people] fully understood Empathy or how to activate their Empathy. I think this subject is understood in some young people, whereas some others have yet to develop an understanding for this type of intellect and be open minded to this subject.... I also believe this programme is better suited to some levels of maturity than others. Some were of the opinion that this programme/ topic was useless, whereas, others were really interested”.

Staff Recommendations

Although it was felt that “*some of the activities worked better than others*”, each of the five facilitators indicated that they would recommend this programme for young people. Facilitators provide several recommendations/suggestions for how the programme or facilitator training process could be improved, such as by including face-to-face training for facilitators, and having “*demos for the Mentimeter and other interactive elements of the programme*”. One facilitator suggested that the programme could be made shorter, in order to reduce repetitiveness among the activity outcomes, while another suggested only shortening “*the sustainable goal part or maybe find a way to make it more interactive.*” It was also suggested that making presentation slides available for facilitators, that display/explain activities to the young people and contain “*links to the interactive parts of the session*” would be helpful. Other comments included placing a “*greater emphasis on the reflection and how to vary the reflective practices for the members, so its engaging and enriching, not just tacked onto the end*”.

“The course at times felt very basic and the members I was working with were more inclined to discuss in depth during the reflective parts what it meant to them personally.

Conclusions

In conclusion, staff appeared to feel that the *ASE Online* community programme was beneficial for young, and believed the programme facilitated the development of empathy and other-oriented skills among young people. Although facilitators believed some activities

worked better than others, there is evidence to suggest that certain activities may be received differently depending on the characteristics of the young people involved. Additionally, while facilitators would recommend this programme for young people, they felt that some changes could be implemented to help improve the programme moving forward.

Overall Conclusion

Overall, evidence from all three components of the evaluation suggest that young people enjoyed taking part in the *ASE Online* community programme and that they benefitted from their participation in the programme. In particular, the programme appears to have helped young people gain a better understanding of what empathy is and how to apply empathy in their interactions with others. Young people also seem to have gained greater confidence in their social skills and developed more awareness of others. However, while the programme appears to have promoted a positive change in youth's interpersonal relationships, there was little evidence to suggest that the programme influences youths' wider social/civic behaviours¹. While both facilitators and young people believed the online programme was beneficial, a preference for an offline, face-to-face programme was evident. Youth and facilitators identified a number of limitations associated with the current iteration of the programme, expressing a belief that some programme activities were more enjoyable or helpful than others, and provided several suggestions for how the programme could be improved. Nonetheless, youth and facilitators both indicated that they would recommend this programme for other young people.

¹ It is important to highlight that this research was conducted during a time when the people of Ireland were experiencing strict social distancing guidelines and may have had more limited opportunities for social/civic engagement.

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Appendix 1

Overview of Feedback Provided by Facilitators on the Fidelity Checklists Forms (Any identifying details have been removed).

Group Number	Difficulty Rating (1-5)	Engagement Rating (1-5)	Value Rating (1-5)	Facilitator Comments
SESSION 1				
Group 1	2	4	5	Everything went well once we got sorted with Technology.
Group 2	1	4	3	The session was a great jumping on point, but felt needed to be coupled with session 2 to ensure there was a flow to the sessions and the member interactions, the interactions and reflections in session 2 were really clear and thoughtful, cause we got the awkwardness of the first group session out of the way. Technology let us down a little with dropping wifi, but members kept coming back and engaging.
Group 3	2	4	2	It was <i>hard to sell the programme</i> , but I think the young people will improve as the activities get more interesting.
Group 4	4	3	3	<i>It was much more difficult to facilitate this online. Young people seemed nervous to speak up</i> , however we will use the chat box more. It is much nicer to have a group face to face in the project. However, they engaged ok and completed their reflections at the end. They seemed excited about the programme and wanted to know more which is really positive.
Group 5	1	4	4	We felt the first session went extremely well. We started with a couple of icebreakers to relax the young people as some of them had never met the others in the group before. All seemed very interested in the programme and got involved in the conversation around Empathy and what it was. The level of engagement was high, and we were both pleased and impressed with what the young people had to say. They enjoyed the YouTube video that described Empathy and we think it helped them have an even better understanding of the meaning. They all said they're looking forward to coming back again next week.
Group 6	3	2	4	Young people were every quiet and uncomfortable for the first session.
SESSION 2				
Group 1	1	5	5	N/A
Group 2	3	4	4	The members reflection was very good and had a very high and accurate understanding of what empathy vs sympathy was. I would look to see if we could challenge this more in some way. Switching on empathy exercise hard to gauge online as to its impact, but they could reflect on it simply. Body map exercise in their workbook was handy, using the online zoom tool we got them to use the whiteboard to do the same as a group to hear what the others were thinking and to help them get into the depth of it. We spent the most time on the reflection piece asking for their "Golden Nuggets" from the course or insight as to their day. <i>I'd look to challenge them more with the exercises</i> , as yet have to see what the other sessions bring but these sessions could be aimed at a higher age perhaps.
Group 3	1	1	1	Young people loved seeing they knew the difference between Sympathy and Empathy. They loved the compare and contrast piece.
Group 4	4	4	4	N/A
Group 5	1	4	5	We had another successful session with the young people this evening. Including resources such as the You Tube clip and the mentimeter kept the young people extremely interested and engaged and helped explain things even more clearly. They all enjoyed the YouTube clip featuring words from Brene Brown. All stated that they had a clearer understanding of the difference between sympathy and empathy and were clearly able to distinguish between the 2 during a short exercise.
Group 6	3	3	4	Young people were a little more comfortable but not all engage to same degree

Group	Difficulty Rating	Engagement Rating	Value Rating	Facilitator Comments
SESSION 3				
Group 1	1	4	5	The group really enjoyed the emotion quiz. They all seemed to enjoy the interaction and were eager to share how they felt
Group 2	2	4	3	Starting to see a trend in the members reactions to empathy as solutions focused empathy followed by a fixing behaviour, the body language section became more about the facial expressions which was difficult to maintain with the members at times, listening features a series of recommendations that couldn't be replicated in the zoom, but for the most part they got it and got why, spent a lot of time exploring the processing questions on this, particularly around the skills we couldn't fully explore, removing barriers and asked if we were on a call with someone in Oz, how could we do that for them in the moment, got them thinking about the ways to get around the technology, We did struggle as a group to get a grasp on the activity for a while. It certainly linked with the previous week sessions and began to test them more as to their understanding of how they react empathetically
Group 3	2	2	1	Young people engaged well as they have seen inside and out before. Young people loved the novelty of the breakout rooms and groups
Group 4	3	4	5	Video- inside out- was received very well and seemed to get the message across very clearly. Young people were able to identify the ways in which she listened empathetically.
Group 5	2	4	5	Body Language Part 2 Option A - We collectively felt this activity would have been much better if facilitated in person. Our young people said it was hard to show empathy or express emotions/body language through a laptop screen that only really focused on their face.
Group 6	2	4	4	Much more engagement and they really enjoyed the empathetic listening exercises.
SESSION 4				
Group 1	1	5	5	N/A
Group 2	2	4	3	So far this was the most challenged the members were in relation to empathy, the how I respond was very easy to complete and a great reference tool when we went onto responding with empathy, We discussed how as members we were quick to respond with an empathetic quip "I can imagine that's very difficult" followed quickly by fixing statement, "come join us and play sport together", coming from an empathetic feeling, but not exploring more with the person who needs the empathy, the group came to the point of how is what we are saying or doing "walking in their shoes" as the processing continued it helped explore the responses even more, the time flew past and went on for longer than planned. Finding common ground, after the depth of the last segment this was very quickly completed by the members and focused on common things, I play sport, I'm from Ireland, it may have been oversimplified, when challenged in the larger group the conversation would go back to the previous responding with empathy segment, and members continued to explore, the "walking in their shoes" Members were asked what true empathy really meant, did they believe that empathy was a challenge, up to now they had said empathy is easy to understand and react to. The model I can't remember the name of would say "blissful ignorance has now shifted into awareness of ignorance" , each member was asked to reflect on the exercises and see in a week what they would do differently, 3 empathetic open ended questions to help understand what the individual in their scenario was feeling,
Group 3	3	2	1	Young people found this difficult but understood by the end of the session. The powerpoint on zoom got somewhat messy with everyone writing on it.
Group 4	2	5	5	Activity 2 not very well received- young people seemed a bit bored with the scenarios. Activity 3- very good- went down well great session overall young people are beginning to think outside the box & consider the feelings/lives/experiences of others such as guards & teachers

Group	Difficulty Rating	Engagement Rating	Value Rating	Facilitator Comments
Group 5	2	4	4	The young people really enjoyed this evening's session. They had fun finding the common ground among them and I think this activity worked really well. There was great feedback from the meditation too and it was nice to end with it.
Group 6	2	4	4	Breakout rooms worked really well and YP are participating well.
SESSION 5				
Group 1	1	5	5	N/A
Group 2	4	2	3	The role plays were very difficult to get right online and the agony aunt is hard to explore as they focused on providing solutions not thinking about empathy. The perspective taking activity was good but hard to get the members to see the link between it / the video and the task of the agony aunt. The timing was difficult to stay with and felt I was explaining a lot of the activity rather than it being a simple flow or progressive exercise.
Group 3	3	3	2	I found that the young people had an off day and this was a quite more heavy topic but they completed it. Young people had some interesting perspectives. Time was an issue as young people found it hard to focus on one thing
Group 4	4	4	4	We noticed that young people already have a better understanding of empathy. They demonstrated this by applying their examples in different activities.
Group 5	1	3	5	[In person session] While the engagement was low among the participants they all agreed that the video that was shown as part of the "Through another's eyes" was extremely thought provoking and opened their eyes to perspective-taking.
Group 6	2	4	4	Good session, breakout groups worked really well
SESSION 6				
Group 1	2	4	4	We felt it a little more difficult for this session as it is very difficult to portray emotion online. The YP were very engaged and as we get to know them better, they are more forthcoming with ideas. All in all, we felt the session went well.
Group 2	3	4	4	Blasting Stereotypes led to a conversation about the stereotype / racist slights that we don't stop or correct when we come across them. There was an excellent iceberg diagram online. What type of Asian are you. Empathy play list was a dud for our group didn't stir anything out of their conversations
Group 3	2	2	1	Young people loved giving their view on stereotypes. It was difficult making everyone take their turns properly however young people enjoyed the session
Group 4	4	4	4	Participants were very positive about Empathy Playlist session and began to share their songs.
Group 5	1	5	4	We carried out this session in person. There was a lot of information to take in this session and made the young people about time where they possibly stereotyped people. It was interesting to hear from them how stereotyping certain people can have a huge effect on one's empathy towards them but by being more empathetic they feel it's possible for people to stereotype people less.
Group 6	2	4	4	YP struggled with the blasting stereotypes, they found it hard to find points to argue with.
SESSION 7				
Group 1	3	3	5	We found last night's session a bit challenging as we were having problems with internet connection with some of the young people this made it difficult for the session to flow. [ed]

Group	Difficulty Rating	Engagement Rating	Value Rating	Facilitator Comments
Group 2	2	5	5	The empathy play list was a wet egg for the group and hard to engage with, the giant steps worked well with the mentimeter to consider their journey in life choices outside of themselves, With the scenarios piece at the end we got them to do one with us in their groups and return the following week after choosing one themselves and prepare to read it out the others, that was really successful, the insight was different from each member but all valid and empathy driving.
Group 3	1	1	1	Young people really engaged well with mentimeter. it got conversations flowing easily as information was presented well. I was disappointed that few people made the effort to do a playlist.
Group 4	3	4	4	These activities may have had more bearing if done face to face but we improvised by one of the facilitators making a graph as the young people scored themselves out of 3 in the social exclusion exercise. It was interesting to see how the privileged young person role's graph was much longer than that of the others. It was very interesting however that when the person with a privileged role scenario was asked the statement 'you feel like you belong' that they decided that they weren't sure. This led to a discussion around the fact that just because on paper you have privileges doesn't mean that you have a good life. I felt this was powerful because the young people are starting to think about how life might be like for others and explore deeper into the lives of others and ask questions.
Group 5	2	4	5	We were able to do Session 7[ed] in person and it worked really well. Our young people did a brilliant job of the activity: The Human Face. For the Social Exclusion activity we used a points system on the whiteboard as were social distancing in the room we were using so one person wrote up the points and a young person agreed with the comment.
Group 6	1	2	2	Really engaged tonight and enjoyed all the exercises. They all feel very comfortable together.
SESSION 8				
Group 1	4	4	3	Activity one and three worked very well, we adapted activity one to pen and paper exercise and this worked very well and took the competitive element out of the task. Activity two about the SGD was extremely difficult to get any discussion going on. Perhaps having this information as supporting info might work better.
Group 2	2	5	5	Empathy for trees got us to talk about the use of snow shrines in Ladakh India and global warming. And the outcome of seasonal shifts turning fertile land into barren Himalayan desert.
Group 3	3	3	1	This session was quite heavy for the young people as a activity had to be dropped as interest dipped somewhat. Young people did however acknowledge the importance of SDGs.
Group 4	3	4	4	Nice session to support participants in finding out what elements of the SDGs they feel most passionately for. This will enable them to pin down a theme for their empathy project. Young people spoke a lot about refugees and felt that they knew so little about them and about the lives they come from. We have all agreed to research this topic a little more for next time.
Group 5	1	5	5	I think this session was highly valuable for the young people as it made them think of empathy outside of themselves and their circle of friends and family and rather the huge importance and effects on Empathy on how we make decisions about the world we live in. It felt like an eye opener for the young people and hopefully they'll take something from it and be mindful of the world we live in and put themselves in the shoes of others-be it another person or another part of nature. We facilitated this group in person and it worked very well for interaction and engagement- more so than doing the session online
Group 6	1	2	1	Heightened their awareness of areas for empathy and where they look for it

Group	Difficulty Rating	Engagement Rating	Value Rating	Facilitator Comments
SESSION 9				
Group 1	2	5	5	Only difficulties are internet connections. This made it hard sometimes to hear the participants.
Group 3	2	2	1	It was important to let the young people say what they needed to prepare for the action project.
Group 4	3	4	5	This was a valuable session where participants explored different ideas for their project. They were passionate about LGBT issues, curious about refugees and also about youth relationships and controlling relationships. They worked well together but we were. [ed]
Group 6	2	4	4	They are struggling identifying suitable projects. Left out boggle as tight on time.
SESSION 10				
Group 1	1	5	5	N/A
Group 3	1	2	2	Young people needed to repeat this session before doing the presentations. I found it important to check in often and thrash out ideas with the young people so they had the confidence to develop their ideas.
Group 4	2	4	5	Participants knew about the logic model from the previous activities in Foróige or school. This made it easier to adapt this model to the project. Participants discussed numerous options for their project and all use excellent communication skills to brainstorm ideas. It evident from their discussions that they have definitely gained a deeper insight into what empathy is and how to be inquisitive about people in our community and not take things at face value but explore a little more.
Group 5	2	5	4	We facilitated Session 10 in person and those that came [ed] found this session helpful and they were very engaging throughout and by working through the Logic Model helped them prepare for and plan out their Empathy Project.
Group 6	3	4	4	No time for reflection as needed all the time to help them with their projects. They struggled with the Logic model, and some are still not 100% on their projects. They are not pushing themselves.
SESSION 11				
Group 1	1	5	5	N/A
Group 3	2	2	1	I was really pleased with the efforts of the young people and it went very well, I found that opening feedback to the wider group was helpful and it created a more fun and engaging environment rather than one person speaking.
Group 4	2	5	5	Participants discussed meeting with a substance misuse service [ed]. They were surprised to discover that whilst the representatives from this service spoke about drug use, debt and dealers they were able to use their new skills to think about and have empathy for the families- especially the children of these service users and what it must be like for them growing up with a parent who misuses alcohol or drugs. This was interesting as it demonstrated how they have expanded their thinking and now look at situations with a more holistic mindframe and a willingness to explore and think outside the box
Group 5	1	5	4	We facilitated the projects online via Zoom due to the new restrictions. We were due to have 3 groups on Zoom doing their presentation but one group was missing. The 2 projects that were presented were excellent and very well presented via Zoom which we're extremely proud of. The message was clear throughout each project and we're very happy with the work put into them and how strong the Empathy message was highlighted.
Group 6	1	4	4	Having to reflect and present their project is a huge challenge for the YP so there is huge learning for them.

Group	Difficulty Rating	Engagement Rating	Value Rating	Facilitator Comments
SESSION 12				
Group 1	5	5	5	The young people seemed to really enjoy the session
Group 3	2	2	1	This was a good final session to come full circle. As with previous sessions I found that by putting it out to the group for an informal discussion developed some meaningful conversations.
Group 4	1	4	5	It is clear from speaking to our group that they are more aware of people now and they see people for people eg. Guards are not just simply guards, they have families and 'real lives and are just as affected by things as we would be. Similarly with teachers- they are not bullet proof, comments and bad behaviour in class does affect them. It has been a lovely programme to run. This programme seems to have ignited a passion in the participants that doesn't simply stop when the programme ends. Our participants are already planning an event at Christmas to support the children of drug and alcohol users.
Group 5	1	5	5	We facilitated Session 12 straight after Session 11 with the young people via Zoom. We discussed all of what they had learned and gained through the Empathy programme and they all agreed it was very thought provoking and interesting and definitely had a positive effect on them. They all set out some Empathy goals which we hope they continue to aim for and will continue with
Group 6	2	4	4	YP really struggled with the habits of empathy, they struggled to relate and understand them. They did enjoy the programme.